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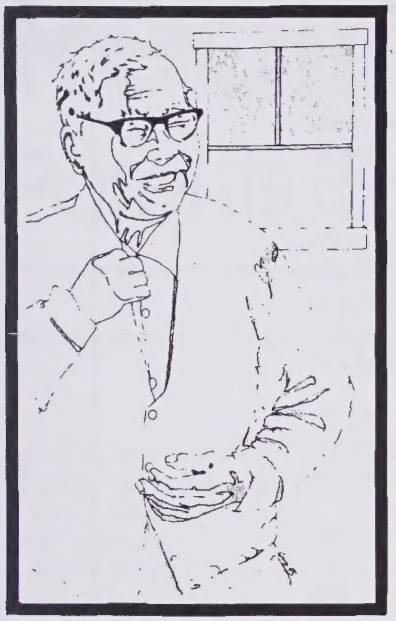

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Editor for this issue:	Jack Seto
Editorial/Production Coordinator:	Satish Dhar
Editorial Assistance:	Christine Pinto
	Teri Chan
	Dora Nipp
Art Direction:	Andy Tong
Cover:	Andy Tong

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EDITORIAL

For 1985, the International Year of the Youth is just more than the usual fanfare of song and dance. From one country to another, the aspirations and problems of youth are the same in one way or another. They can range from scholastic and athletic achievements to their enthusiasm and resourcefulness to whatever task given to them. The ages 15 to 24 are the so-called "formative years". The story about the facts of life finally make sense. For young males, it's the startling realization that dating is fun. For young females, it's the realization that a career is more than just cooking and cleaning the house. These are the years of learning and the enhancement of respectability.

Being a youth doesn't mean that life is problem free. There the uncertainty of finding a job; of not having access to the university of their choice; of having responsibilities thrust upon them; of the need for friends, freedom and respect. Thus, a lesson in reality.

You can say that this is the media generation. Youths are influenced by what type of clothes, words and gestures from their media stars. They can be from the steamy world of "The Young and the Restless"; the provocative Prince in the movie, "Purple Rain"; the lighter side of television's "The Facts of Life" or the outrageous comedy of Eddie Murphy's film, "Beverly Hills Cop." The massive overexposure of rock videos of Michael Jackson and Madonna to name a few helped set the lifestyles of the 80's. Adding the factors of family life, environment and economic class help complete the makeup of the mainstream youth.

However, life for the youth of a visible minority are complicated by such factors as a cultural gap with their parents, identity crises and racial prejudice. In this issue, we take these conditions into account and try to shed some light on the world of Asian Canadian youth. Through these articles we can only see the tip of the iceberg on their intense feelings and the rest will slowly rise to the surface.

Jack Seto

Asian Youth Realities I

Parents, Friends, Identity, Racism

by Jack Seto and Christine Pinto

In this interview Asian Canadian youth give their candid views about what it means to be an Asian growing up in Canada.

The opinions expressed here are those of the participants only. The interview participants do not constitute a representative sample of their communities. So please don't be alarmed by what they say. On the other hand, don't sweep their ideas and opinions aside because you don't agree with them. These opinions are deeply felt and they do provide a great deal of insight about what the youth themselves feel about their world: their parents, their families, their communities, the cultural gap; about racism and about their future.

This interview is the first of a two part series on Asian Canadian youth. The second part will be published in the next issue of The Asianadian.

What do you think is the difference between Asian and Canadian cultures?

Mayur: I don't think of myself and other Indians as Canadians. I am a member of my own community first. It's not because of racism, but it's easier to communicate and socialize.

Mohammed: To me, a mainstream Canadian is a white person who speaks with a pseudo-American accent. After being here for 5 years and becoming a Canadian citizen, I feel more Pakistani. I guess it depends on where you've grown up. To be fully Canadianized, a person would have to adapt at an amazingly quick rate. High school is the critical stage. It helps define what you feel. To me, the average Pakistani is an unfortunate human being who is undernourished. The females are socially repressed.

Mike: Toronto doesn't have a harsh economic division between ethnic and cultural groups, like in British Guyana, where Indian immigrants transported the class structure from their homeland.

Jane: Orientals have high pitched voices when they get excited. It drives me nuts. My idea of an East Asian is of a person dressed in Moslem style. Even though I know it's not true. Once I saw this Sikh woman who was wearing western clothes. She was walking 10 paces behind her husband. He was wearing a turban. The Japanese? They have a calm and collected personality. It's like they don't have any emotions.

Asians are good and generous at times. They're considerate and I wish more Canadians would adopt that quality. Canadians do a lot of gesturing and touching during conversations. Asians seem to believe in pre-arranged marriages. As Asians become more educated, they will become Westernized. They will change.

Mayur: Canadians see Indians as very smart or very stupid.

Nguyen: When Canadians think about Vietnamese, they feel sad and sorry. I guess it's from knowing about the wars.

Did you ever have an identity crisis?

Nadia: In grade 4 when we entered the education system we had to answer the most bizarre questions. For instance, did we swing from tree to tree? Or, had we ever seen cars before? Sometimes my sister and I would make up stories and people would lap them up. They'd come and stare at my jewellery and re-

mark that I must be from India. But I'd reply, "No, are you? I'm from Sweden!"

Elaine: When I was 13, I wanted to fit in. Because of my background and parents, everything worked against me. I had to watch my brothers go through the same experience. It was kind of painful watching all this. It's got to the point that I have learnt to accept the situation and say, "To hell with this!" Instead of worrying about it, I have decided it was great being different after all.

Mary: It depends on what I'm thinking about. Well, I know my home is Canada and English is my number one language. But, I want to learn Chinese and know about the traditions and the culture, because I am Chinese. But I do have it in my mind that I'm Canadian first.

Jeff: I think everybody does, especially in your formative years. You're being pulled in so many directions. Thus you should determine which side to align yourself with. It all depends on timing. Like in a get-together with family and relatives. You can't avoid noticing your lack of knowledge of the language and traditions. We all have to wrestle with it on a day to day basis. I don't think you'll ever come to terms with this identity crisis. It's always with you.

Tom: I don't think that type of conflict will go away. When you grow older you begin to find out more about yourself. Then you can make some sort of a decision.

Lisa: To me, I know I'm Canadian. But people say, "Yes I know. You're Chinese Canadian."

Aruna: I don't like Indian customs. I know Rakhi, a festival representing a sister's love for her brother. I don't have any brothers, so I celebrate with my cousins. Holi is another religious festival. I know how it's celebrated but not why.

Aruna: My parents and I never agree on anything. We argue 90% of the time.

I may not know the language of my Korean boyfriend, but somehow I feel like I belong to his culture. Most of my friends are Koreans and they don't come to Indian dances. I may marry a non-Indian. My parents have accepted this.

Is there any cultural gap between you and your parents?

Nguyen: Asians usually respect their teachers. But a Canadian kid might even punch one. It happened in grade 8. My parents stressed to me that school is important. In other words, go straight home and study. In our country, if you want to be successful, you have to be educated.

We were taught to talk to strangers with politeness. Sometimes our quietness is seen as snobbishness or rudeness. However Canadians consider getting something off their chest quite healthy. We tend to keep things to ourselves.

Also, anyone who owns a Trans Am or rides in one is famous. But of course I don't regard these things important.

Rosalia: I remember wahen I was in in high school my mother strictly followed the old traditions. According to these traditions, girls aren't allowed to go out unchaperoned until they're 18.

I was invited to go to a high school prom. I said yes to the guy without telling my mother. When the guy came to pick me up, my mom said, "No, you're not going out. It's be-

Name	Birthplace	Ethnicity	Sex	Age
Lisa	Canada	Chinese	Female	26
Jeff	Canada	Chinese	Male	29
Rosalie	Philippines	Filipino	Female	28
Tom	China	Chinese	Male	33
Elaine	Canada	Chinese	Female	23
Alex	Philippines	Filipino	Male	21
Mary	Canada	Chinese	Female	19
Charles	Hong Kong	Chinese	Male	24
Mayur	India	Indian	Male	19
Mike	Canada	English	Male	22
Nadia	Uganda	Indian	Female	26
Jim	United Kingdom	Scottish	Male	22
Jane	Canada	English	Female	27
Mohammed	Pakistan	Indian	Male	23
Nguyen	Vietnam	Chinese	Male	21
Ming	Malaysia	Chinese	Male	24
Aruna	India	Indian	Female	19

cause you didn't ask me." Poor guy, he was right there. He had to go home.

For everything I do, I have to ask my mother.

Lisa: I don't understand the Chinese customs. Like when you're only 15, you don't want to go to school with dirty hair. So what if it's the 10th day of August (or any holiday and family birthdays). Who cares! You just want to wash your hair. What difference does it make?

There are certain drinks that women can't have. I don't understand why I can't have these drinks. Nobody ever really explains it to you straight out. It aggravates me because I'm expected to accept the situation. I don't want to accept it.

People who are born and live in China have to listen to their parents. Because we are Chinese Canadians, we have the right to ask what we want and to say what we want.

Jim: Western people see Asians spitting into toilets. It really puts them off. Asians blow their noses over a sink which the Western people think is filthy. But Western people blow their noses into a cloth and then stick it into their pockets. I guess it depends on what you think etiquette is.

Elaine: With mother, you can talk about almost anything because she was born here. She is a free thinker. However, with my dad, his attitude is it doesn't matter whom I get married to since I won't carry the family name. He has definite ideas of what a man and a woman should do. I can't believe it. I keep thinking, "This guy is ancient."

Charles: I only have a generation gap rather than a cultural gap. Even though I do understand some of the differences between the Canadian and Chinese cultures, I tend to be more Chinese. When I get married, I hope my children can retain the Chinese language.

Alex: My parents tried to push the traditions. I grew up here. The environment influences you. I can't speak the language. I can understand it but don't have the right accent for it. I don't think I ever will. It's not needed for me. Filipino parents however, want a lot of honour from their kids. It's just natural I guess.

Nadia: Father is a strict disci-plinarian. He feels that as a woman you have two strikes against you. You're a woman and brown. So you have to work twice as hard. Mother is very cautious about guys. She always worries about who will marry me. Also if there are any eligible guys from our community available.

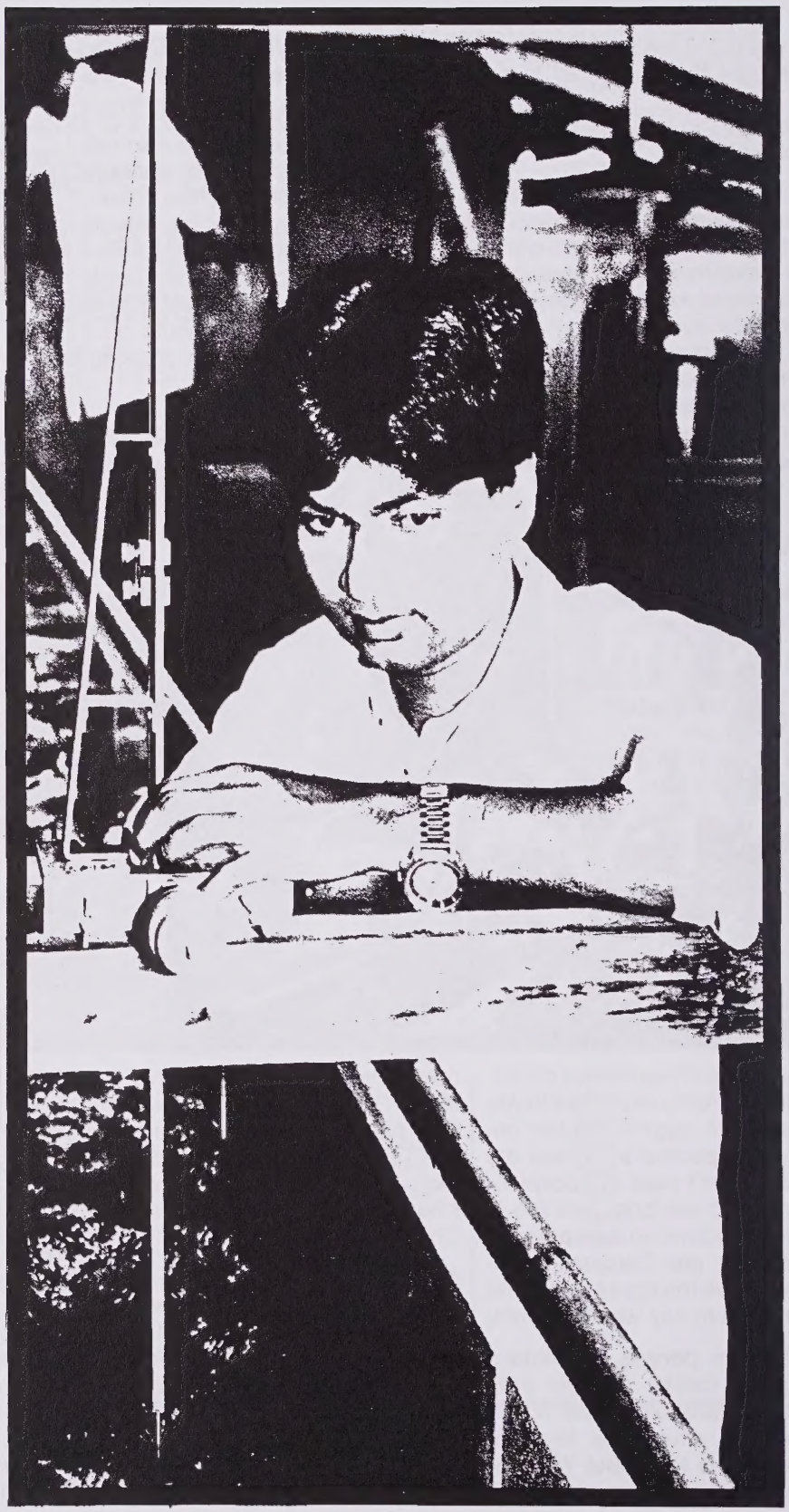
Mayur: An Indian upbringing made you respect your parents and elders. With the society here, one must leave home at age 18. But one is more dependent in India. There, you choose your family over your friends.

Nguyen: Asian parents spend their leisure time with their children. Kids are their pride and joy. Canadian parents put a time limit of 20 years at home. Then you move out and become independent. Their attitude is, if you stay longer, you're hanging onto us. Why do they think like that?

Tom: I guess I'm baffled by a lot of the traditions. I don't really understand the meaning of them. Maybe

that's why I'm resentful about some of them

Tom: The future looks a lot better now.



Aruna: My parents and I never agree on anything. They have too many old fashioned ideas. I can't remember an occasion when we did get along. We argue 90% of the time. The rest of the time we sleep. We still argue about school, especially since my marks aren't high enough. Or that I come home too late. Or it's over boys – too many boys – and that I'm too young to go out with boys.

What's their method of discipline?

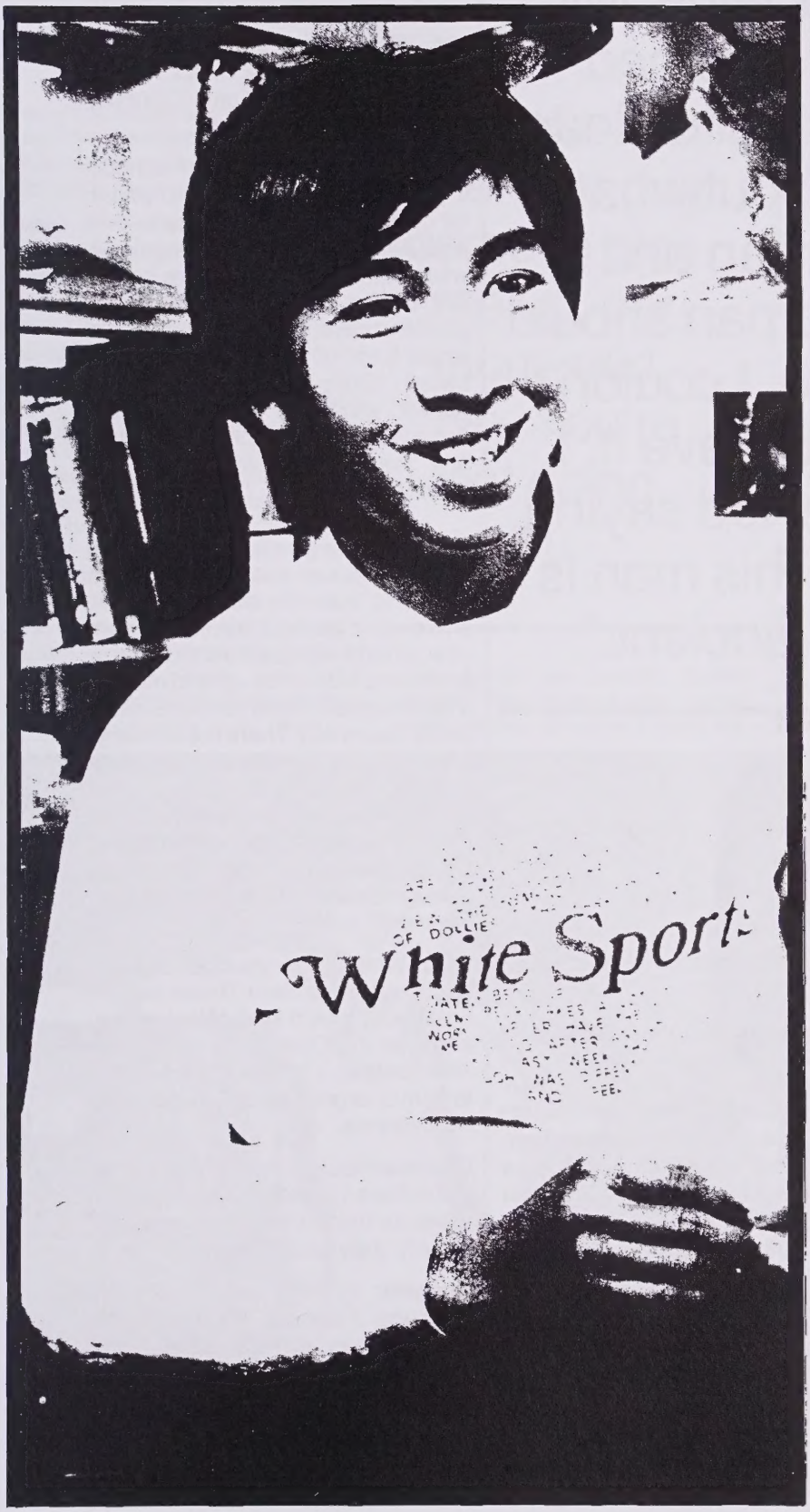
Aruna: They shout and argue in Hindi.

How does an argument end?

Aruna: I go to my room. I just stand there. If I left home, that would create more problems. I have no faith in my family. That's why I'm not a family person.

I dropped biology because my parents wanted me to be a doctor. I dropped French because they wanted me to be bilingual. Never went to church in my life except on a tour in New York. My family is religious. Whatever they do, I do the opposite. I became a Jehovah's Witness for three months. It's because my Korean boyfriend's mother was one. I wanted to see what it was like because they were bothering me. It was painful. I would rather forget it.

If the opportunity comes, would



you live with a guy?

Aruna: My parents wouldn't like it but I'm not against it.

My parents' friends are strictly Indian. They relax mostly with their own kind. I don't watch television. I go home, go to my room and close the door.

Nadia: When I was in Grade 4, I was asked, "Have you ever seen cars before?"

Were you ever viewed as a non-Canadian at work?

Alex: People don't think I'm Filipino since I have no problems with my English.

Jim: Filipinos tend to work very hard. I guess it's because they need the money. One attitude about Asians is that if you get one in, you get them all in. An example is letting the supervisor hire his family and relatives into the company.

Jeff: It all depends on the profession you're in. I was in real estate for three years. It was a company where there were a number of ethnic salesmen. Because of our ethnicity, it narrowed down the type of customers we got. The company I worked with was Ukrainian owned. Thus, there was no chance of getting into management.

In certain professions there are few restrictions, while in others there are many. Your ethnicity has no bearing. It's a matter of performance, the amount of knowledge

and what you are able to get across. I'm not speaking for all businesses, but most of the ones I know judge you on your performance. Of course I haven't seen any Chinese presidents or vice-presidents around.

Lisa: I was viewed as a Chinese. They hired me because I was Oriental and we were supposed to be hard working. When I was working in a major department store cafeteria, we had to set up and clean up ourselves. Nobody else would help.

Rosalia: Because I worked in hospitals where there are a lot of Filipino nurses, I was treated like one of the workers. However, most of these nurses had worked in the Philippines before and had a lot of adjusting to do.

Charles: Sometimes the Canadians don't consider me as part of their group. Maybe it's the communication. Most of my Canadian co-workers are good and accept me.

Elaine: In my first job, I had a boss who looked Spanish but was from Jamaica. He grew up with a lot of Chinese. He always said that the Chinese were hard workers.

In my present job in a department store, there are a lot of workers from different racial backgrounds. I don't think performance can be based on race. Everybody is generally the same. I have a feeling that due to some sort of equal rights bill, they had to hire people from different backgrounds.

Mary: No, not really. I'm basically treated the same as the rest of the workers. However when I was going to grade school, I remember being sometimes "racially attacked." But now because society is accepting multiculturism, it's easier.

I do however remember something that wasn't directed to me. I worked at a major department store where most of the cashiers are Chinese. I heard this through someone else that one of the managers said that the cashiers are the "minority frontline" or something like that. It was rude. I figured that if I was there, I would have said something to him.

Elaine: My dad had definite ideas about what a man and a woman should do. I couldn't believe it. I started saying, "This man is ancient."

Did you experience any bad racial incidents?

Mayur: If we Indians had been in Canada several generations, we would have had a better image. There wouldn't be so much racism against us. Especially violent racism. There have been quite a few incidents. I have blocked them out of my memory now. In school everyone clings to their own group. It's hard to break through these barriers.

Nadia: All my experiences with Canadians have been positive. Indians too. But it takes one asshole to spoil things by saying, "Where did you learn to speak English so well?" It's downright arrogant and annoying.

Mary: No. I guess most of my friends are Canadians and accept me. When other people see me, they see me as a Canadian. I figure if I just hang around with Chinese, I will have that problem.

Lisa: When we went to high school, it wasn't bad. I hung around with a lot of Italians. I find their culture is a lot like ours. In public school it wasn't so bad either. Like we called the Italians, "Wop", etc. My three girlfriends and I were always with a whole band of Italians. So we were called "Chops" because it was "Chink" and "Wop" mixed together. But it was good. I didn't really have any bad experiences in high school.

Elaine: My brothers suffered more than I did. I was a lot tougher back then and I usually defend myself. There were the odd incidents. Even now, when I walk past a school yard and some kid comes up and makes a racist remark, it just takes me back and it's stunning. There are so many prejudiced people out there and that shocks me. I thought we had come a long way and everything is all right now. My mother explained to me that each race had to go through this phase especially during rough times.

Alex: When I was younger and living in an Italian and Greek neighbourhood, they'd kind of look at me and call me Chinese or whatever. After awhile, I learned it's nothing to fight or argue about. Let bygones be bygones.

Charles: Not that much. Most of the Canadians I meet are quite good. I mean for those that I always talk to. Usually they accept me.

Nguyen: In high school, it's no problem. However it's harder to make friends with the Hong Kong visa students than with the Canadians.

In university, you can't miss it. They just don't hate you but they just stay away from you. I don't think

they care. Asians aren't that outspoken. They have problems too. I wish all humans wouldn't hate each other just because of differences.

Mike: In high school. there were mostly jokes against Pakistanis. My Korean friend engaged in racial comments. Although there were a lot of Chinese students, there were no cases of racism. There was a feeling of competitiveness. We were divided. Anger developed over tests, especially when the answer was called out in Chinese. The teacher didn't know what was said.

The students in class talked loud. That brought them attention. Like telling a joke in Chinese. Asians never studied at school or at the library. Maybe it was the librarian. She was white, right wing, Western Guard type and made the students uncomfortable. Even the "rich" Jewish studentsfelt uncomfortable. Their parents were quite upset.

Rosalia: So when the guy came to pick me up, my mom said, "No. You're not going out..."

My family are usually liberal minded. They were against racial or sexual bias. But when I heard my friends and their parents talk, I thought they were absurd. Especially about their crazy customs having to be passed on. In the Judaic group, my friends were giving out the same beliefs which lacked insights towards others. And my Korean friend randomly selected a Pakistani guy and called him names whenever he got drunk in the company of a couple of Caucasian guys.

Ming: No bad incidents. However I achieved sudden fame in school when all the teachers told the students that I was the smartest one.

Any comments on Asian Canadian communities and its future?

Mayur: For the future, Indians should now enter the political ring. Get involved in the running of the country and making laws.

Tom: It's hard to say. In certain

ways a lot of Chinese Canadian heritage has not been pleasant. A lot had to do with persecution in extremely bad times. I think our accomplishments have been limited. It's because we've been restricted in what we have been able to do in Canada until recently. Basically, the Chinese have been kept very low in the social ladder.

The future looks a lot better now. If you want to make a comparison, we could say that we're the "Jews" of the 1980's. We are flooding a lot of the professions. We have a lot of influence politically now. Financially, we are very powerful.

Elaine: One part said it's great. By going into Chinatown and looking in at all the interesting stores. But the other part said I can't stand it. Like when you're trying to get service from salespeople. I feel that I get passed by, because I'm not aggressive enough and don't speak Chinese. They look down at you for that. Other than that, overall Chinatown is great.

Alex: I feel you have to live up to certain expectations of the Filipino world. You know, honour and respect your parents. The community is growing, like in Parkdale – west-end Toronto. A lot of Filipinos are getting together and celebrating our background. They have a fiesta day in a Toronto park at least once a year. Also, we have a Filipino baseball league. Six or seven years ago we didn't have one.

Lisa: When our parents came here, there were so much prejudice. They have come a long way. They didn't know a word of English. They all got jobs. They were all menial jobs like being a cook, a dry cleaner or working in a factory. You just do your work and don't say anything. You never get promoted because you don't speak enough English. A lot of the orientals had problems like that. But they're happy. It's because of their family. They look at us kids as their future. That's why it's important to go to school, have a good education and work hard. That is why we studied hard because of our parents' jobs. Just think, they came here with nothing in their pockets. Now, they have cars, a house and kids they can be proud of. For them it's really a great accomplishment.

Nadia: All my experiences with Canadians have been positive.

Charles: It depends on how we behave here and how we work together to adapt and contribute to this society. I'm proud of our history and the good side of our culture. On the other hand, I feel that there are certain characteristics of the Chinese that aren't good. Like being conservative and closed minded. They tend to separate themselves from other Canadians and stay in their own group. They don't accept Canadian lifestyle. There should be some way to educate the older generation to change that, like through the mass media.

Mary: Sure, I'm proud of Chinatown. It's because it's a tourist area. I'm Chinese. Not that I'm into culture or anything, but I'm proud of being Chinese.

Nguyen: When I was young, I didn't like to be different. But now I know there is something special about my culture. It's something beautiful. I used to think that the old values are old fashioned. Now I'm happy.

Growing Up With GUNG FU

or How to Learn Commitment

by Teri Chan

After nine years of teaching high school students, Robin Young is still the one whose individuality and growth potential stands out among all the others. Our history as student and teacher and then as friends began in the halls of a well-known downtown Toronto collegiate, whose population was made up affluent Rosedale and middle to lower income Chinese-Canadians. On the surface, Robin was much like his peers, except that he was half-Chinese, from a single-parent family, and was devoted to the art of Gung Fu.

Those three factors contributed to his growing up somewhat differently than the others. There was a greater sense of balance, responsibility and solid decision-making at a time when most adolescents were still awkwardly pursuing trendy fantasies. Robin has always struck me as being very realistic about his choices in life and willing to work hard towards achieving his goals. And unlike many of his male peers, he was always sensitive and caring, while being strong and gallant. And, his Chinese background gave him an equally strong sense of duty to his family, respect for his teachers and honesty, humility and integrity of thought and action. There is always a sense of "doing what is right" for family, friends and career. All these values played a role in his odyssey through high school and then in his entry into the goal-oriented world of the young adult. It is as his former teacher and now as his friend that this interview was conceived. This is the story of a rare individual.

ASIANADIAN: *Who were your heroes when you were growing up? Who are your heroes now?*

ROBIN: My primary hero when I was growing up was Bruce Lee. He was the person that brought the martial arts into the public eye with his movies and TV appearances. When he became famous, everyone who studied martial arts wanted to be as skillful as him. Everyone imitated his style and manner. For myself, I think Bruce Lee should be what Gung Fu was about as opposed to how to do it. He was the first one who gave me something to relate my training to outside the club. He showed me that the martial arts was something to develop and was bigger than a dozen people practising in a damp basement in Chinatown.

Now I would have to say my heroes are my Gung Fu instructors, James Lore and Jack Chin. Both have dedicated not only their time, but most of their lives to teaching a proper method of Hung Gar Gung Fu. They have kept the style pure in a time where the martial arts have been subjected to degradation and misconception. I have seen other instructors who don't teach how or why a technique is applied, but are more interested in getting their students to just do what they say. Jimmy and Jack have always taken the time to break down a technique and explain the mechanics and the application.

Both instructors have allowed a certain amount of freedom to explore various other techniques and have respect for other styles of martial arts. They teach the art in an unchanging way, to keep the form and technique the same for later generations. The self-defence aspect is dependent on the individual. They have instilled the philosophy of "use what is good for you." They recognize strengths and weaknesses in their students and work with them.

A: *How early was your involvement in gung fu and what was it like then?*

ROBIN: When I started training at Jing Mo, I was eight years old. My impressions back then were more

on the negative side. Why am I here going through all this pain, rather than being with my friends playing baseball? Being a child and one of two "white guys" at the club, and not speaking Chinese, I felt alienated from the main body of students and I felt I had to prove myself to be accepted. I did what everyone else did, no less and sometimes more. But the instructors and senior students would be very helpful in my learning process and when appropriate, show enough patience to help me grow. That is not to say that it was easy. On the floor, the instructor was very authoritarian and we all followed. When formal class was over, instruction was more relaxed. But when someone yelled "Line up!", we resigned ourselves to a very rough workout. I went home crying on more than one night, and actually quit more than once. But Jack or Jim would phone my mother, whom they both knew well, and I would be back on the floor the next night.

A: *How did Gung Fu affect your years growing up?*

ROBIN: Jing Mo affected me in various ways when I was growing up. I guess the biggest way was socially. Living in the heart of downtown Toronto, there were numerous opportunities to get mixed up with the wrong type of kids. Some of the kids were into stealing or just getting into trouble. Eventually, I found myself hanging around with them less and less and found myself going to Jing Mo more and more.

The club gave me a sense of commitment, that is, once I was old enough to know what commitment was. It showed me what discipline and determination meant. About a year ago, one of my instructors told me that he would set up a challenge with his students. He made them work very hard and the only praise given was when there was not complaining about how bad they looked. He told me he set it up intentionally, so he would get a very dedicated group and the ones that could not "meet the challenge head on" would drop out. If we did not hear "you move like a duck" or "you may as well go home and enjoy yourself", we were doing something right.

"I went home crying on more than one occasion and actually quit several times."

That philosophy has given me personally an attitude that you have to take a risk or work hard to gain something. If there is an obstacle in my way, I go around it. If there is a problem, I solve it. Through Jing Mo, I have learned that testing my physical and psychological limitations can be healthy and rewarding. The challenges at the club have made me seek out other challenges to see how I come out. If I pass, I learn about myself. If I don't pass, I still learn about myself.

When I was just starting Gung Fu, for the first four years, my primary goal was to gain acceptance and respect from my instructors and fellow students. That meant working hard. Now my goals at the club are to be an effective instructor. If I can teach someone something about Gung Fu and make them understand, then I have reached a significant goal.

A: *How do you see your role at the club?*

ROBIN: My main role at Jing Mo is to help teach. I run the students through a "formal" workout, practising the classical movements of Hung Gar. After that, I prefer teaching on an individual level. The club is small enough that I can do that. To be able to teach Gung Fu in a way that a person can become good is tricky. If it is too hard, people will quit. If it is too easy, there is no challenge. I take two approaches: the first is to maintain the art and its quality. I teach the forms and techniques the same way I was taught. I expect my students, when they teach, to teach the same way they learned. This way, the art keeps its integrity in later generations. When I perform a martial art demonstration, I tell the students to have the attitude that our instructor's teacher is in the audience. This method makes the students work hard for proper form and technique.

The second approach is more towards actual self-defence. I try working individually with the students and recognize their strong and weak points. I try to give a lot of myself, so the student puts a lot into what he is learning. This tends to be more relaxed and informal, but the work still gets done. For instance, when I spar, I go hard enough to make the student work, but I also allow him to complete the technique he is trying to use. There is no competing against one another. It is a learning experience and I look down upon the students trying to defeat one another in sparring. I try to recognize what the student needs and work on it from there. If I have five students, I teach five different ways, appropriate to what I want to teach and what they want to learn. In our club, the best way to teach is to conform to what the student needs rather than force him to accept my way as the only way. I attempt to let the student learn on his own as much as possible.

This also extends to the way I teach at Humber College, where I teach anatomy and physiology lab sessions once a week. Although there are set objectives for what the students have to learn, I approach the students with what they already know, and see if they can answer their own questions. I find that the methodology that my Gung Fu teachers taught me, I am passing on to all of my students.

A: *Do you intend to open your own club someday?*

ROBIN: I would only open a club of my own with the blessing of my instructors. Right now, my first responsibility rests with Jing Mo and I have no considerations for venturing out on my own. So, I do not think I will open my own club for a long time. I feel I have to improve in so many ways. I know of a few people who have opened clubs as a business and it is a hard way to live. You have to commit yourself to being a good businessman and a good teacher. If you don't do it right, your teaching can be affected if the business is going poorly. To date, I have taught outside Jing Mo with my instructors' permission. While I attended the University of Waterloo, I taught at Ron Day's Kung Fu Club in Kitchener and I also taught at Wilfrid Laurier University for a year and a half.

Gung Fu can offer a young person many things. Some I mentiuoned such as discipline and motivation. It can also offer a cultural tradition. With a sense of confidence, the self-defence aspect becomes less important, but is there if it is needed. Young people need constructive activities to help build their personalities. Gung Fu can offer these positive opportunities to a young person.

A: *What were your experiences growing up with Chinatown in the background?*

ROBIN: I grew up about a block away from Chinatown and have always spent a fair amount of time there either at Jing Mo or shopping with my mother. Despite the language barrier [Robin doesn't speak Cantonese], I felt comfortable in the culture. I knew a lot of people through my mother and instructors.

Probably the nicest feeling I received as a child in Chinatown was being recognized as one of Jimmy and Jack's boys. Store owners would recognize me from doing the Lion Dance or Dragon Dance on Chinese New Year, or on "Double Ten" day.

I feel fortunate to have a bit of Chinese culture. It has been a part of my life and I am glad I can give something to the Chinese community in the form of a lion or dragon dance. When the club does a dance in a smaller city such as Sudbury or Kingston, it makes the Chinese people who see it feel good because they haven't seen one possibly since they left China. We bring an old tradition back to them. They are a minority and have very few chances to see the lion or dragon on Chinese New Year. I think it makes them feel good, especially the older generation. And I think the Canadian-born Chinese children learn a little about their culture by our performances too. They have the opportunity to see a very old tradition in a world where they tend to adopt more western ways. They have to learn a new language, learn different values and in some cases put up with racism. The lion dance can give them a feeling of racial pride and identity.

A: *How do you deal with stress and frustration?*

ROBIN: The martial arts have provided me with a vent to release stress and frustration. I work in the Ambulance Service as a driver-attendant. There are times when my partner and I arrive at a serious car accident, or work on someone who dies in the hospital, all of which are the typical stresses of an average day. For myself, there is a buildup of physical and psychological tension that could affect my work. Going to Jing Mo and beating up a punching bag before I explode at another person is a beneficial thing. When stress starts to hit, the club becomes a sanctuary for me and provides the means to work that stress out of my system.

> "Through Jing Mo I learned that testing my physical and psychological limitations can be healthy and rewarding."

Also, some of the skills I learn at Gung Fu extend to ambulance work. For instance, there is a lot of hand-eye coordination in Gung Fu. When I am driving an ambulance, going through heavy traffic on an emergency call, reacting to constant changes in traffic has to be immediate if an accident is to be avoided.

If we get a call where my partner and I are not sure about the situation, then observation is necessary. Recognizing a hazardous environment, such as live electrical wires or violent patients, is always a primary concern. I try to assess my surroundings and call for assistance if there is too high a risk factor. Even being in good shape is important when lifting a heavy patient up or down a flight of stairs.

A: *You recently participated in winter camping with "Outward Bound." Why did you want to involve yourself in such a risk-oriented activity?*

ROBIN: The confidence I have built through the martial arts has allowed me to explore other risk-taking activities that test me both physically and mentally. This past January, I took an "Outward Bound" course in Winter Wilderness Living. "Outward Bound" is an organization which teaches safe outdoor living. The course I took was located 150 km north of Thunder Bay on Black Sturgeon Lake and lasted 21 days. It was broken down into three parts. Part one was a five day immersion to teach us basic skills of snowshoeing, backpacking, setting up a winter camp, using dog sleds, collecting fire wood and being as comfortable as possible in -35°C temperatures. Part two consisted of returning to a base cabin, planning and then executing a ten-day expedition along Lake Nipigon. Here we applied what we learned. During this time the instructors progressively removed themselves as the leaders and by day 7 we made all the decisions. The final part included an ice-climbing expedition where we scaled 30-50 meter cliffs of ice.

Once involved with this course, I was committed to subzero temperatures, high winds, 40 lb. backpacks, and long, hard treks across frozen lakes and through dense bush. The course was hard, but safety was always of prime concern.

As long as I can see where the safety margin is, I will consider taking part in a potentially dangerous activity if I can learn something from the experience. For the moment I learned about myself on "Outward Bound," I would do it again. I feel I can participate in other risk-oriented activities with confidence. You have to be willing to take a risk to learn about yourself.

A: *What do you consider to be one of your biggest challenges?*

ROBIN: One of the biggest challenges in my life was going through Officer Training with the Armed Forces. The physical demands were extremely tough, but the mental demands were probably worse. It seemed that the whole course was geared towards getting people to quit. It seemed that everyday a sergeant was asking you if you

wanted to quit or a warrant officer was giving you pushups. The course lasted four months and consisted of infantry training, leadership building, and wilderness fieldcraft. Of the forty people in my platoon at the beginning of the course, 20 completed it. A lot were let go in the final week during a five-day exercise with no sleep, little food and a lot of marching. If you "played the game" i.e. put up with the harassment and met the requirements, you passed and became a junior officer. The course instilled discipline and pride and taught the importance of gaining objectives. My present challenges are to become better in Hung Gar Gung Fu and to improve my teaching skills. These are subtle challenges to me and more difficult because I set up my own goals and meet them.

Gung Fu is as much a personality builder as a form of self-defence.

A: *What is your definition of Gung Fu, after 17 years of training?*

ROBIN: Hung Gar was originally meant as a means of defeating opponents in war. Back then, every confrontation was a life or death struggle, so soldiers excelled in the method to live another day. They learned various weapons as well as unarmed combat. Today, I feel that the basic message is the same. Self-defense is what Hung Gar is all about, but in today's society, people look for other areas that can be developed through Gung Fu, such as fitness and the art form.

For me, Gung Fu is a self-defense, first, an art form, second and a means of fitness, third. I have learned to be very conscious of my skill, to remove myself from potentially violent situations before they get violent. I also feel confident enough to protect myself if the situation is unavoidable. My personal feeling is that, given the chance I will try to get out of the situation, otherwise I will try to verbally or physically control the situation. I do what I have to do to get out of the situation. When it comes down to actual survival, I intend to win. It all depends on how well I can judge the other person's motives.

Some martial artists join a club to get in shape. The method has greater appeal than jogging or fitness class. Gung Fu classes develop all aspects of fitness such as flexibility, strength and cardiovascular fitness. Moreover, just as important as a form of self-defense, Gung Fu is also an art. The student learns a form or a lion dance technically. He learns the movements and application. When he performs them, he adds "himself" to the movements. He interprets the technique in a way that expresses his own personality. Through the expression and interpretation of the practitioner and the appreciation of the observer, such as in the lion dance, Gung Fu can be classed as an art form.

"You have to be willing to take a risk and learn about yourself."

A person who seriously studies Gung Fu has to develop an appreciation for his physical abilities, become more self confident and learn respect for other people. He recognizes his strength, but also sees his limitations. Aggression is released in the club setting in a controlled manner and becomes less important the longer he stays ifn the martial arts. So, with the serious student, Gung Fu becomes just as much a personality builder as well as a form of self-defense.

Theatre Employment for A

It's Not Easy, But There

by Susan Carter

Employment has been an ever pressing issue for Asian youths of today. The field of fine arts offers an individual artistic career path to pursue; however, we must look at its future potential and limitations.

Within the past two years, the theatrical field has surfaced as a viable means of employment. For instance, in 1983, the Canasian Artists Group in association with Toronto Free Theatre proudly launched the Canadian premiere of R.A. Shiomi's critically acclaimed play *Yellow Fever*. At that time *Fever* was currently running in the Chelsea district of New York and was touted as the buzz of Off Broadway. R.A. Shiomi, a native Japanese Canadian from Toronto, unsuccessfully attempted to mount the production in Canada in a mainstage theatre. Ironically, *Fever* enjoyed box office success in the U.S. hence, prompting Canadian theatres to rethink its evaluation of the play.

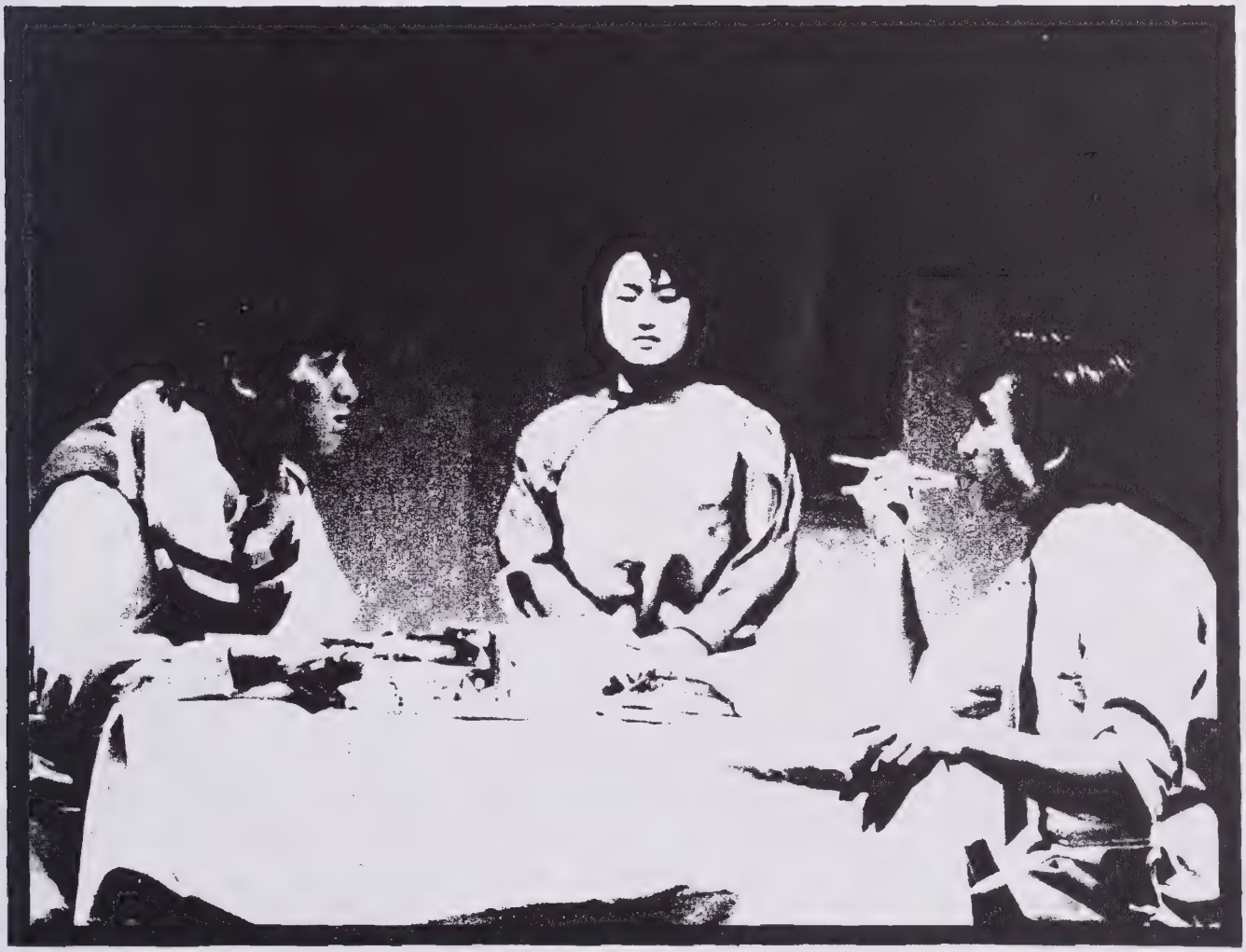
Fever, a highly stylized mystery parody, is reminiscent of a Sam Spade, or Phillip Marlow detective spoof with a familiar premise. Through the use of comedy, *Fever* strikes out explosively at the myths of preconceived Asian stereotypes thus provoking serious thought on being an immigrant minority in Canada. The plot gravitates around the mysterious disappearance of the "Cherry Blossom Queen" from Vancouver's Powell Street Festival in the early 1970's. Private eye, Sam Shikaze is immediately on the case with Captain Kenji Kadota from the police force hot on his heels. What they uncover while cross examining themselves and each other is a sinister and convoluted series of events.

It was the intention of the Canasian Artists Group and its producers Phillip Ing, Terry Watada and Susan Carter to bring to the attention of the public the first ever, professional Asian Canadian theatrical venture. There were several firsts – *Yellow Fever's* premiere signified a landmark in Canadian theatre history, it featured a Japanese Canadian lead character; and also, a predominantly Asian cast and crew.

By utilizing the human resources available to the group, the theatrical art form became a basis to aid in the promotion and discovery of Asian Canadian artists. No longer were the performers and production crew subjected to the basement attitude of theatrical productions for "community" activities. Acting could potentially serve as a means to a full time professional endeavour rather than as a "hobby." The hiring and auditioning of staff itself certainly posed a problem. How were the producers to discover suitable candidates with talent, or undiscovered talent which required boiler room nurturing? Different avenues were taken in the search – specifically placed ads through Canada Manpower, local

Asians

e's Hope



arts newsletters, publications and perhaps the most result oriented way – word of mouth. Up until this point, the Canadian theatrical climate did not encourage visible minorities to perform in mainstream productions. The performers were excluded from lead roles regardless of excepional displays of talent. The attitude is one of regression; whereby, the available roles attempted to slot the Asian peformer into the chorus line, or portray subservient housekeepers, in other words all that appeared either sombre or inscrutable. Applicants for *Fever* were requested to perform naturally without any preconceptions of Oriental behaviour. The re-educating process for the general public was about to begin.

A fully professional Asian Canadian theatre company requires government funding to survive.

Fever had found an audience that comprised of approximately 70% non Asians and 30% Asians. Yes, there was hope that a similar project such as *Fever* could once again receive critical acceptance by both the critics and the public. Therefore *F.O.B.* written by David Henry Hwang was chosen to become the next play to be mounted.

The *F.O.B.* production is a continuation of the goals of becoming the first Asian Canadian theatre company that seeks out an appropriate vehicle for Asian Canadian actors or actresses. With various levels of governmental support during the second year of operation, the company was able to sustain active understudies, thus expanding employment opportunities. The cast for *F.O.B.* was comprised of an entirely new selection of performers and understudies. In the past two years, the theatrical venue employed a total of 10 Asian performers, three production personnel, three administrative trainees, three full time professional staff members plus a multitude of dedicated volunteers. The question arises, "Can the goals of the previous production create an attainabale theatrical company truly representing the Asian artists?"

F.O.B. opened to mixed reviews from the press, and disappointingly did not receive similar box office success despite the fact that the target audience was a larger scale. The support base appeared to be lacking within the Asian community. In the aftermath, a re-evaluation of the saleability of the "product" required serious attention. *F.O.B.* did not have the commercial appeal as compared to *Yellow Fever* due to the contrast in story content. *F.O.B.* would most appropriately be considered as a production for alternate theatre instead of commercial theatre. Does this insinuate that an Asian production must be more commercially viable in order to develop a strong return audience base? If so, then the artistry of the playwright suffers immensely, therefore, such productions require government grants to sustain works which otherwise would be dismissed by public tastes. Breaking ground or becoming a pioneer in dispelling the stereotypical Asian through visible artforms may indeed take years of persistence. In 1983, Toronto Free Theatre's Artistic Director, Guy Sprung had the foresight to realize the potential impact and statement of *Fever.* The co-production between Free Theatre and the Canasian Artists Group was viewed as progressive in thought and innovative for its timely appearance. The idea of the facial mask disappeared once the audience followed the plotline of the play.

In order for a fully professional Asian Canadian theatre company to exist and survive, it must at this time rely heavily on government granting agencies. It would serve the artistic community best if the theatre company became a solely autonomous group that does not fall under an umbrella corporation with other artistic interest. In so doing, this action would allow a heavy concentration of possibly two or more productions in a year rather than an annual play. The exposure would entice a larger audience base. The concept of a "company" would be used in its purest form and therefore have the ability to provide a showcase of play selections ranging in an array of new works, musicals, comedies, and/or drama. In a company situation a core group with trainees and apprentices would ensure and nurture talent for the future market. Indeed a continuous flow is required to positively assert the Asian Canadian thespian into both the commercial and non commercial market. The path towards Asian performers is presently marred by an environment whereby a majority of artistic directors, and casting agents have yet to overcome personal reservations in choosing a visible minority. Asian Canadian theatre is just beginning. Ten years from now, I would hope for a steady pace of progress and assimilation into the mainstream of the arts community. To fail in this endeavour would result in the failure of equal opportunity for equal talent.

The Asian performers are slotted into the chorus line or portray subservient housekeepers.

Faces of Enigma

The Art of Shuk Cheung

by Paulus Lau

"Space composition is the art which humanizes the void, making of it an enclosed Eden."
Bernard Berenson

Elements of mythical thought, fantastic imagination and an enigmatic vision dominate the most recent works of Shuk Cheung.

At the beginning of her career, Shuk Cheung was attracted to the basic two-dimensional abstract composition – a world of pure form and pure color in intellectual suspension. From 1979-82, she produced a series of totally non-representational works, entitled "Squares." These squares were systematically arranged upon their surfaces, exquisitely proportioned and optically precise. She strove to show how these textures could be experienced melodically and could seem to possess sound and atmosphere. Color was her way of creating a "vibratory space" that had weight, density and presence.

She chose the square because she felt that it was the most convenient and rigorous embodiment of uninflicted, saturated color. She began testing its meaning as a performing quality by combining it with patches of different colors. The squares she created were discreet and subtle and as any early work of a young artist, her paintings contained a whole vocabulary of tentative abstraction from nature. They resemble modern architectural structure and also contained elements of spontaneity.

Shuk Cheung was quick to internalize ideas associated with

abstract expressionism. A patient and painstaking searcher after metaphysical truths contained within color and form, she worked diligently and with great lucidity for the past two years towards the making of a pictorial unity. Her new integration of the painterly "Faces of Enigma" that float on the surface of her canvases becomes semi-representational. These series of paintings which she produced from 1982-84 are far more intellectually ambitious and emotionally expressive. While one may see them as "faces" or "masks", they carry more potential meanings and mythical implications. The language of painting is now extended through the use of vivid colors, textured surfaces and emotionally-charged images.

Though she had devoted her early apprenticeship to the European surrealists and automatists of the 1920s and 30s and to the American abstract expressionists of the 1940s and 50s, her new series of "Faces of Enigma" remain curiously untouched by the intense and obsessive images of Juan Miro, the subversive and mysterious objects of Rene Magritte, the rainbow slatherings of Willem de Kooning or the savage whorls and drips of Jackson Pollock. By constructing exquisitely intriguing "faces" within their powerful optical containers, she has succeeded in both internalizing this inheritance and containing the artistic effects. Within the inventive boundaries of these images, her dashing brushwork freely enacts the rituals of surrealistic and abstract expressionistic styles. A great innovator, she has conceived an highly developed painting vocabulary, which she is skillful enough to use with care, with modesty and at her best, with genuine elan.

"Where I was born and where and how I lived is unimportant. It is what I have done where I have been that should be of interest."

Shuk Cheung was born in 1954 and came to Canada at the age of nineteen. She graduated from the Ontario College of Art in 1979 and has been the recipient of a great number of scholarships and awards. Since then, she has worked in Montreal and New York and is presently living in Toronto. As Georgia O'Keefe once remarked, "Where I was born and where and how I have lived is unimportant. It is what I have done where I have been that should be of interest."

A WINDOW

A Short Story

by Kerri Sakamoto

As she entered the reading room of the library, she saw that her book was not on the table where she thought she had left it the day before. She approached a brown-haired girl who was shelving some books.

"David's got your book," she said. She pointed to the back of the room. The figure seemed lost amidst the expanse of a white wall, but approachable for that reason. She began walking toward the table at which he sat. Her book was in his hands, long slender fingers cradling the cover. As she neared him, he lowered the book and looked up at her. His eyes forming a silvery blue bridge seemed to traverse the bland high-ceilinged space of the room and to focus upon her. This seasonless room, removed from the world beyond its walls, was always as colourless as the dust that settled into the spines of dormant books. But today, she felt the airiness of autumn in which he had somehow enveloped himself. The fine spray of his hair gleamed golden as a thin shaft of light beamed in through an upper window and across one part of his face. Dashes of light, shadowing some distant outside movement, arched and glimmered, sliding along the curves of his cheek. She became conscious of the stark incongruity of the coarse blackness of her own presence within this scene.

"Hello," he said. "I think this belongs to you." He lay the book down in front of her. His movements were measured, aware of the perimeter of the enclosure which he calmly imposed upon the open room. He seemed detached from everything around him. It was illusory, however, for she then noticed a girl sitting at a table nearby.

"I hope you don't mind, but I read a few pages. It was very moving." As he spoke, his face remained expressionless; words were emitted carefully from between his thin lips. A certain fineness expressed itself to her in the delicate web of tiny lines encircling his eyes. His nose was lightly tanned.

The book contained the collected letters written during and after World War II, of a young Japanese Canadian woman whose immigrant parents were stripped of their property just after the bombing of Pearl Harbour.

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The book contained the collected letters written during and after World War II, of a young Japanese Canadian woman whose immigrant-were stripped of their property just after the bombing of Pearl Harbour.

"She and her family, along with thousands of others were evacuated from the west coast and sent inland to live in camps," she said, thinking how her words stumbled along awkwardly. He nodded, explaining that he was studying Canadian history.

"This is an important part of Canada's history," he said, watching her closely. "Many people don't know anything about it. I suppose others would simply like to forget."

His words rose and fell into a clear, precise cadence. He asked if he could borrow the book when she was finished with it. Then, looking to the corner of the page where she had scribbled her name, he smiled at her.

She waited a week before approaching him in the library with the book. He looked surprised. "You remembered," he said.

Later that week he asked her to have coffee with him. "I found this one particularly interesting," he said, showing her the open book. It was a letter dated the fourth of March, 1942, written to the woman's brother in Toronto. David began to read slowly, with a careful eloquence which lent a controlled power to the woman's impassioned words:

Okay we move. But where? Signs up on all highways... JAPS KEEP OUT. Curfew. Like moles we burrow within after dark, and only dare to peek out of the window or else be thrown into the hoosegow with long term sentences and hard labor. When you get a notice to report to the RCMP for orders to move, you report or be interned... The Niseis repudiated by the only land they know, no redress anywhere..."[1]

He stopped reading and looked up at her. They were both listening intimately for the lingering resonance of what he had just read.

"Your parents were placed in one of the camps?" he asked while watching her intently with those clear, unclouded blue eyes that never seemed to blink. He wanted to know if they harboured any feelings of resentment after all the years. The question startled her because she had never before in her mind formulated a response though she had often pondered over it.

"I suppose my mother does. Not my father. He thinks it was for the best. Now we're just ordinary Canadians even if we don't look it." She laughed nervously.

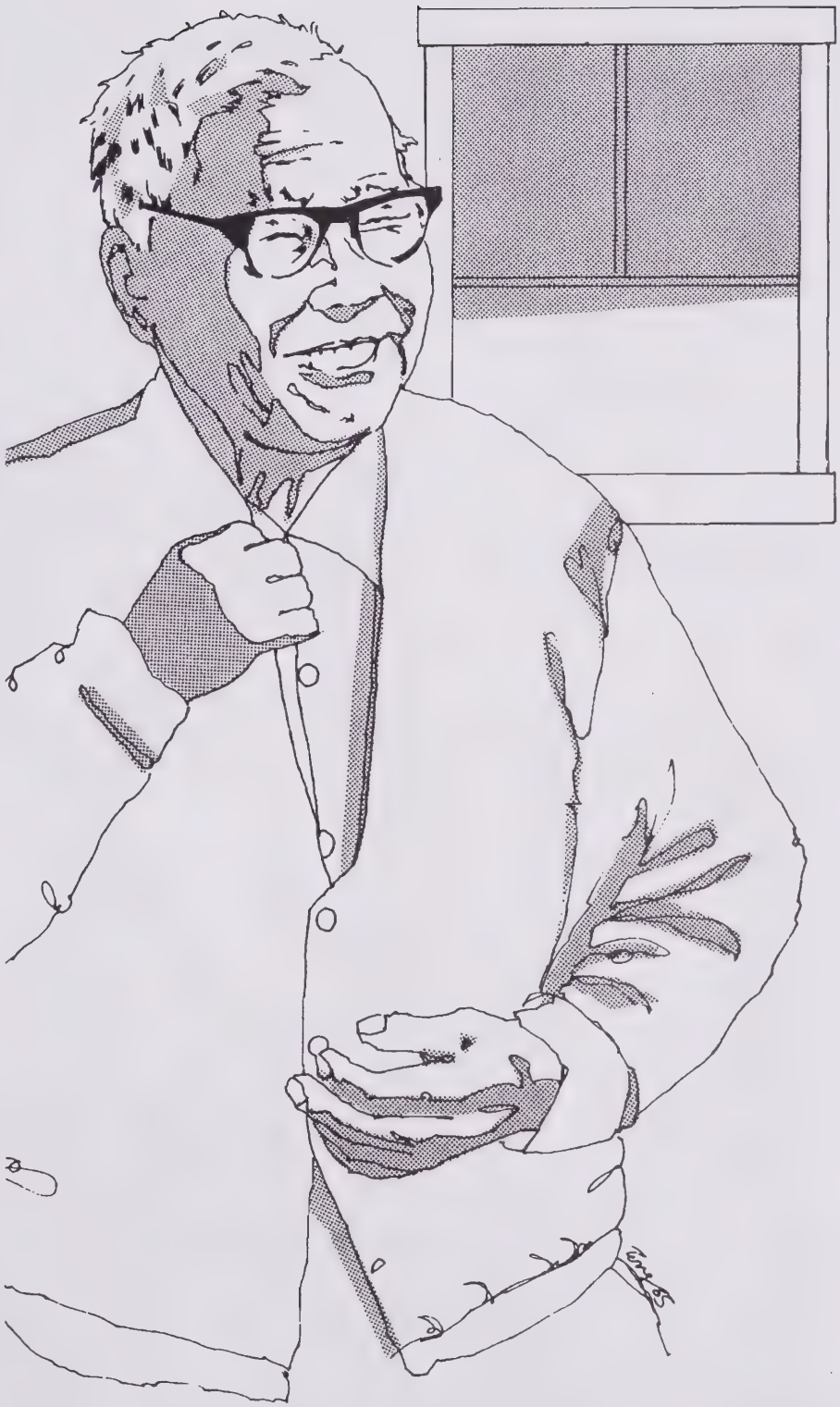
"But your mother doesn't think it was for the best?" he continued, his expression unchanged. She felt foolish for having that old and obvious joke which had become a way of dealing with deeply felt confu-

"She's very bitter. You see, her brother, my uncle, died in the camp."

sion.

"No," she said. "No, she's very bitter. You see her brother, my uncle, died in the camp."

She hadn't realized just how much her mother had suffered. Not until she came home one day last year after having spent the summer out east on the coast. She slid her key in the lock, the same key that she had worn tied on a string around her neck when she was nine, when her mother was working as a seamstress downtown in the garment district. As she opened the door, she saw her mother sitting among scattered photographs taken over 35 years ago. It was as if she were seeing her mother for the first time as she truly was. She looked haggard and tired. Her mother sifted through these old pictures so often that it never seemed unusual to find the albums spread out on the coffee table. But that day, her mother with greying hair, blended too well with the faded black and white snapshots. She was holding her favourite picture which was the one of Uncle Shoji sitting on some rocks in front of a tiny waterfall. Its edges were worn from being clutched tightly on afternoons such as this. She had asked her mother why she hadn't had the picture framed. It was because she could never bear to see Shoji beneath glass, unnaturally preserved. No, his image would crease and grow grey with the rest of us, she would say. She always spoke of the



"...we shrugged and said: shikata-ga-nai, meaning, it can't be helped."

day that Shoji died, telling her, you must remember because it is important, you mustn't forget, her voice low and distant. She, herself imagined everyone kneeling around his bed, watching his uneasy breath rise up into the air of the tiny cold cabin in the mountains where Grandma had to sweep up snow from the floor every morning and evening. Her mother told her how handsome Shoji was, how all the girls in the camp chased after him, how well he played the harmonica. Her mother's recollected fragments provided her with a jagged puzzle. She envisioned row after row of shacks, thin boards hastily nailed together, and icicles frozen between the slats – all contained by circles of barbed wire and rock. And from inside one of these shacks, a young girl peered out a window at the far edge of the camp where a feeble fire extinguished Shoji's body watched over by Grandpa.

"You see," her mother said, "we were homeless. And Shoji died there, in the middle of nowhere. Your grandmother and grandfather wanted to go back to Japan after it was over, but it was not home for the rest of us. And it really wasn't home for them anymore." As she listened, she noticed flecks of worn brown on the skin of her mother's hands.

"How did your uncle die?" David asked. The light in his eyes lifted her back up into the present moment.

"My mother says he was unloading crates of supplies for the camp when one of them fell against his rib cage. After that, an infection set in and he got meningitis and died." It amazed her that she could recount a life ending in a single sentence without pause, without mentioning the thousands of half-sentences, of utterings and sighs she had heard over the years – not only from her mother's lips, but from those of aunts and uncles who had sat in that inner circle around Shoji's bed.

She occasionally ran into David either in the library or around the campus. They would discuss their courses and professors, but invariably he would steer the conversation toward her parents' experiences during the war. He would prod her for precise, detailed information about the evacuation, but she could provide him with little. All she knew and felt was contained in

Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre

the worn photographs belonging to her mother, tucked randomly between the blank pages of an old leatherbound album; all she knew and felt was expressed in the lines and creases on her mother's face.

One morning she saw David in the university cafeteria. He had a book tucked under his arm.

"I've just finished reading this. You should have a look at it." He pulled up a chair beside her and placed the book down in front of her. It was an historical account of the evacuation of all the Japanese Canadians from the west coast. The words that peered up at her as she leafed through the book were foreign words, alien to the vocabulary of her mother. They were words like prison camp, enemy, racism, hatred. The author, a man of Dutch origin, spoke of the violation of civil liberties; political opportunism. It was not because of the actions of any government that her mother was bitter. It was because of death, because her beloved brother, Shoji, had been taken away from her when he was seventeen. She didn't think there was a need to read this book. As she closed its cover, a newspaper clipping slipped out from under the jacket. It was an article about a group formed in the United States which was seeking restitution for the injustices suffered by the Japanese Americans during the war. David told her that a similar group had formed in Canada and that a meeting was to take place in the city next week.

"It's important for you to go," he said. "Your mother, too." She shook her head.

"My mother would never go." David looked perplexed. She wanted to respond, to ask him if he had read the last letter that the Nisei woman had written to her brother. She wanted to know if David had understood when the woman wrote of the Niseis, "...we shrugged and said: shikata-ga-nai,"[2] meaning, it can't be helped. Her mother would never attempt to change the past, nor alter the future. They would all endure and accept. And it felt unnatural for her to explain this to David right now, like a violation of her mother's stoicism.

She supposed that she, too, felt confused. She was unsure of the exact nature of her mother's feelings about the years spent in the camp, a place called Lemon Creek. It occurred to her that they must have been having fun at times because there were photographs of her mother smiling alongside some girlfriends in the camp. There were pictures of variety shows they put on for one another in which they dressed up in funny make-do costumes mimicking a part of that imagined outside world; no one was around to tell them that there was no such thing as a Japanese cowboy. There were other small snapshots of best friends, signed, love, Reiko, just like those in her own high school yearbook. And then there was the picture of Shoji in the dark coffin with the sombre faces of all her aunts and uncles in the background. That picture was most unlife-like to her. Not only because it depicted death, but because she could never imagine herself in such a scene, she didn't know how it felt

to lose a brother. The sorrow that stared from their faces was a mythical mask unlike any emotion she had ever worn. If she looked closely at her mother in the photograph, she could see the same expression that her mother wore forty years later on idle afternoons. She felt something was waiting, welling up, and that she must tell her mother about the meeting.

Her mother refused to go, offering no explanation. But there was a need for words aloud, for the articulated unclenching of cramped fingers at the corners of photographs.

"You always told me how important it was not to forget," she said. Her mother looked at her pleadingly.

"I meant uncle Shoji. You mustn't forget Shoji," she said quietly.

"And what about where he died, and how he died?" Her mother sat down on the couch.

"I don't want to go," she said. "It was something we all had to live through but there are things I just don't want to remember now." She closed her eyes, slowly leaning back. These things unspoken, longing to be forgotten, had hung sullenly between the two of them. She wanted to hear her mother cry out as that woman had in her letters, of the wrongness of what had happened. They had all been cheated.

"What things?" she demanded. Instantly she regretted those two words that echoed as harshly as the sorrowful shadows that fell over her mother's face. Then, suddenly, her expression became one of vibrant anger.

"Things, like lining up for food with a tin plate in your hands, carrying back two dry pieces of bread to your cot as if it were a feast. More than that," she said, her voice tautly stringing tumbling words, "it was the feeling that you shouldn't be who you were. It was the shame, the humiliation and not wanting to be what you were and feeling that it was your own fault for being that." She looked exhausted.

"You go to that meeting. And tell me all about it afterwards."

She lingered in the lobby of the community centre before entering the auditorium where the meeting was to be held. She felt nervous and uneasy. There would be speakers representing the Japanese American groups who were actively seeking redress for the wartime injustices. Following the speeches an opportunity would be given to the audience to speak and to ask questions.

She seated herself at the back of the auditorium removed from most of the others. As the seats began to fill, she surveyed the crowd noticing many people of both her parents' and her own generation. She also saw many Issei who reminded her of her own grandparents. This was the first time she had been one of a roomful of so many people who shared her history. It must have been the first time in a long while for many of them. She felt very alone and afraid for the moment, wondering what might erupt from this cold sea of resolutely expressionless, unreadable commonality. She had come here in her mother's place, as the bearer of her mother's wounds, hoping to be healed. Looking around again, she saw no faith-healer, only other silent wounded, and then she felt calmed.

Several men walked onstage seating themselves at a long table facing the audience. There must have been over 200 people present. The first man who spoke was a Japanese American. What impressed her about him was his sincerity. He was a small, slight figure on the stage but he spoke effectively. Her mother would listen to this man.

"This is something terribly important to remember," he told them all. "You must not let your country forget what you have suffered." She watched the crowd. The man's simple supplication was a soft hand at their elbow, gently turning them toward the precipice of their own rage. It flew out from their faces momentarily before being replaced by the willful calm. It was present as it had been for a long time, a keen metal edge waiting to catch the light at a precise angle. It was a flinching in their countenance and she shivered thinking of the collective years of silence, the forty years of self-abnegation. But this emotion, she realized, must more than flash and glare in isolated moments, it had to emerge, slow and gruelling from within.

University of British Columbia

The next speaker was the leader of another group of Japanese Americans. His voice was loud and hard and as he spoke, his arms flailed out from his body and dropped heavily onto the table. His sentences were short and curt, as if in combative formation. He paused in his address, studying the people.

"We must fight for redress," he said, his voice booming. The audience cowered into a shelled silence. Again he scrutinized the crowd before continuing.

"They treated us like animals," he said, "like cattle. They put us in stalls that stunk of manure. And then into prison camps." His fist pounded the table. "Our only crime was to look like the enemy. We were dirty Japs. Now there must be restitution." He spoke as if there was a revenge to be exacted, he was inciting them to hate and to spite. His words amplified throughout he room had an unwieldy power. But these were not their words, and the injustice had not changed them into a spiteful people. When the speech was over, a few people clapped vigorously; most of the others looked lost. She, herself, was certain that her mother would never approve of the sum of money that this particular group was seeking from the American government. How could a measure be taken in monetary terms of the death in an evacuation camp of a young boy who had never seen Japan, only the Canadian side of the Pacific Ocean. Her mother's family had received only a token amount from the government for their house on Powell Street in downtown Vancouver. They had all worked hard to keep up the mortgage payments. Her mother was always dreaming about moving back to the coast, buying a house overlooking the ocean.

The chairman opened the discussion to the audience's participation. The room was quietly brimming and flooding with emotion it had not yet learned to articulate. The chairman was young, not much older than herself, and visibly uneasy in his role presiding over this large gathering.

"Before we discuss what form redress should take, perhaps we should first take a vote concerning the principle of redress itself," he suggested. Beside her, a man sighed in impatience. Several people stood up in various parts of the room to object. A man in one corner of the auditorium thought that a vote was unnecessary, while another said that it would be premature since a committee should be first set up to consider the question of restitution. Then there would be the question of who would sit on such a committee. The chairman began to appear exasperated at the profusion of hands and voices now being raised. There was a ticking inside the head of every individual that now felt the urgency of time more intensely than ever. But the ticking began, singular and unique and no collective regular beat could yet be heard. Within each of these persons there was an anxious rhythm that would advance and skip and jump back. These rhythms fell into a wave that swept through the crowd swaying amidst indecision.

A man who looked very much like her grandfather shuffled up to the microphone at the front of the room. He spoke in Japanese, his voice wavering in softy vowelled tones. He bowed, then returned to his seat. It took several moments for an interpreter to be found. Within that pause, it seemed to her those mute rhythms could be heard by all, secretive, prayerful, and a pained warmth encircled her, an ancient familiarity her mother had known which she, too, might embrace.

A young woman approached the microphone with a slip of paper in her hand. She cleared her throat.

"Mr. Ozawa would like to know how we could possibly decide on the amount of money each person should receive. And what about all the Isseis who are now dead. Who will receive their money? Mr. Kobayashi's property is now worth millions of dollars. But he suffered no more or less than the rest of us when it was taken away from him. Mr. Ozawa says he does not want the money for himself. It is too late for the Issei." The woman cleared her throat again then returned to her seat.

She had come in her mother's place, as the bearer of her mother's wounds, hoping to be healed.

Again there was silence. She thought of how swiftly the decision had been made to move all of these people, how quietly and efficiently lives were upset, uprooted, the lives that they had sprawled out in this country as if it were their own. All of them had been gathered up, put aside. Today in this room in which they assembled themselves, they could not overcome the simplest indecision, they could not seem to decide that they wanted the world to know that what had been done to them had been wrong. The frail man before the microphone was the genuine beginning, his fragile voice rose above a hushed, confused current. All this dredged emotion would find its orderly expression.

The chairman announced an intermission during which green tea and other refreshments were served from a long narrow table on the far side of the auditorium. The table was timidly approached by a few people after several moments. As she poured herself a cup of tea, she saw the old man who had spoken earlier. He was nibbling on a

rice cake and he did not appear nearly so feeble as he had to her from the back of the room. Soon there were many people milling about the table as brightly coloured cakes made of sweetened rice and soybean rapidly disappeared.

Four men of about her father's age presently appeared on the stage. Each of them raised a harmonica to his lips and a haunting tune issued forth. Most of the crowd was busily engaged in conversation as the music floated into the room. Gradually it penetrated each spoken word, ladening it with resonance until the low hum of voices was indistinguishable from that of the instruments. Behind the four men, a handwritten sign had been haphazardly suspended from two pieces of wire wrapped around a wooden beam. It read: The Ghost Town Boys. She wondered if Shoji might have once played with them.

Shortly after, the meeting was resumed. More men and women spoke, some in favour of monetary compensation, others not. Some simply yearned for the chance to speak and to feel that their experiences were of some importance. Towards the end of the evening, a middle-aged woman, a Nisei, approached the microphone. When she first began, she was barely audible since the microphone had momentarily gone powerless. A man adjusted the connection to an extension cord, then urged her to continue.

"We have to make the government recognize once and for all that Japanese Canadians are individuals and should be treated as such." The woman's voice surged with the regained electrical power.

"We have a moral obligation to seek direct compensation from the government, each and every one of us. In 1942, 22,000 of us were faceless, nameless. Today, I want to say to them, look at me, look at my face, my name is Susan Nishikawa. Watashi wa Nishikawa desu." She bowed to the audience. The woman swallowed, then spoke in a louder tone.

"This is something terribly important to remember," he told them. "You must not let your country forget what you have suffered."

"If some individuals would like to see funds pooled for community projects, then let that be decided among ourselves, without the help of the government." Widespread applause was heard. The woman again bowed very low before returning to her seat. The strength of her words and the eloquence of that traditional gesture moved her greatly. There was a Japanese translation and after a few moments, the meeting was adjourned.

Later that week she visited her mother. She told her what had happened at the meeting.

"I remember Ozawa san," she said, smiling. "A very kind man. He had a lovely garden in front of his family's cabin in Lemon Creek. My girlfriends and I would pick some of his flowers when he wasn't looking." When she told her mother what Mr. Ozawa had said about asking the government for collective funds for an old folks home, she was in agreement. She didn't mention what the other woman had said, but she would in time.

Her mother put on a recording made by a popular Japanese singer, then disappeared into the kitchen to make some tea. Recent mail lay in a pile on the dining room table. Amongst telephone bills and thank-you cards, she spotted a leaflet ripped in half. Addressed to her parents, it was a questionnaire which asked if they favoured redress for the injustices they had suffered. She looked to her mother as the latter set down a tray on the table.

"Your father did that," she said, staring at the torn paper. "I should have thrown it away before he saw it." Neither she nor her mother had told her father about the meeting. She knew that her father had been opposed to the whole notion of redress, but what she hadn't realized was his strong feeling of disgust at the thought of seeking money from the government. That disgust was

apparent in the two slashed halves of paper held now in her hand. She began to wonder about all those people who had attended the meeting, if once leaving the room, the inchoate will to speak out would submit to habitual silencing. There was the fear of being vulnerable by being too visible once again. Neither her father nor her mother could see how much a part of their lives the shame and the fear had become. She reached into a cabinet drawer and took out a roll of adhesive tape.

"If you're not going to answer these questions, then I will," she said. Her mother held out her hand.

"Give it to me," her mother said, picking up a pencil from the table. She sighed, pointing across the street to a neighbour's house where an elderly woman lived. Her raised hand was a gesture willed with old world weary strength.

"That lady wanted to know why I deserved money from the government. I told her, somebody's coming to your door today. They tell you to pack up all you can carry, leave the rest – your house, your dishes, everything, and get out. Don't come back. After that, she was quiet."

She promised her mother that she would call later in the week. When she quietly closed the door, her mother's head was bent intently over two halves of paper held together with adhesive tape.

The next day, late in the afternoon, she met David whom she hadn't seen for several days. He was walking across the university quadrangle when she caught up with him. They continued walking together.

"How was that meeting?" he asked.

"There were a lot of people. More than I expected,." she said. Though she knew something important had transpired there, it was difficult to explain to him just what had been accomplished. She could say that people who had been silent for more than forty-two years had begun to speak out.

...but what she hadn't realised was his strong feeling of disgust at the thought of seeking money from the government.

"I read in the paper the other day that survey questionnaires had been sent out to Japanese Canadians in the province," he told her. "Barely over one-fifth responded. Now they have the chance of regaining some of what was taken away from them and they do nothing. Absolutely nothing. I can't understand it."

"I know it's difficult to understand, they're difficult to understand. All they have ever known is to accept and to say, shikata-ga-nai." She had no other words with which to explain.

"It cannot be helped," David said quietly before she could add anything more. They were now standing still in front of the library. His eyes stared at her as his hair wisped in the wind. The sun shifted behind cloud casting a changed, unnatural light. He seemed very foreign to her at that moment, as if he were invading a private, frail place where she had begun to construct a precarious understanding. The light in his eyes was a deflecting one emitted from a glassy blue uniformity. The glassiness suggested a window, or an opaque glass wall which she did not yet feel prepared to penetrate.

After a while, she left him, declining his offer of a ride. She began to walk slowly in the direction of her parents' home. By the time she reached the house, the sky had begun to darken. She opened the door with her old key to find her mother busily preparing something in the kitchen. She seemed preoccupied but happy to see her.

"We'll have some ocha," her mother suggested as she brought two small teacups from out of the cupboard.

While her mother bustled about in the kitchen, she sauntered into the livingroom. It occurred to her that she ought to have thanked David for having told her about the meeting. She sank down in a chair and looked to the front window that only returned her reflection. She gazed at herself openly, and curiously.

[1] Muriel Kitagawa, Letter to her brother, Wes Fujiwara, 4 March 1942.

[2] Muriel Kitagawa, *Gray Dawn on Another Day*.

Chinese Youth Are Losing Their Culture

How CSA Is Fighting This

by T.Y. Ho

The CSA can be thought of as the center of Chinese student activity at UBC – like a mini community center servicing the needs of the Chinese students. The club was started in 1957 with the goal to promote interaction among Chinese students on campus. At that time, there was a demand for organized social events for the idle Chinese students for there was still a racial barrier preventing them from total integration into the predominantly white population on campus. Moreover, functions such as dances and social nights brought many of the students together and allowed them to meet other students with similar backgrounds.

Today, after two decades of change, a third focus can be added; the awareness of Chinese culture to many of the Canadian-born Chinese. The influx of Chinese families immigrating here in the late 60's to the early 70's has created a generation of youth lacking the knowledge of Chinese history and culture. In my opinion, the problem arose from the easier acceptance of Chinese people into Vancouver's society. No longer do we have to fight for acceptance wherever we go. The road was paved for us by the previous generation; the people who grew up in the discriminatory times. They are the professionals and prominent Chinese people today who have influenced the acceptance of Chinese people through their affluent positions and status in life. They have not forgotten and have helped to make Chinese people more acceptable to society.

The problem with Chinese youths today is their attitude toward their culture. Many feel there is nothing good to be learned about their culture because they cannot see the direct benefits. This is understandable because it takes maturity to really appreciate one's background. More surprisingly though, many of the Chinese youths brought up in Vancouver express no desire even to learn. They feel since they live in Canada they should be only concerned with Canadian culture. And to compound the problem, the social pressure to assimilate into today's society has made some youths to break away from traditional Chinese values, such as family life and family values.

The concern is not only for this generation but also for future generations. If we continue to ignore our culture, we will not only hurt ourselves, but our kids as well. They will be trapped in an identity crisis like many of our young Chinese youths – people today – confused about their background and where they belong. It is wanting to know these facts that are important and not just the facts forced upon them. This internal desire is bred through family upbringing. Thus if a family abandons the Chinese culture, there will be less initiative for the young people to stimulate themselves. Why should they care if even their parents do not deem it important!

For those students that have the initiative to get involved in their culture, the CSA will, as it has done in the past, sponsor some cultural events this coming year. These include calligraphy, Chinese painting, language classes and others. It is a fun affair which allows us to dabble and get some insight into the beauty of some of the arts. Naturally from these classes one will not become an expert, but by coming out and introducing yourself to these events, you may appreciate and understand more of the arts later on, as in the case of languages you may wish to get back to the orient to use what you have learned.

CSA is a club for the Chinese students at UBC. And the success of the club depends on the involvement of its members. Although many of the social functions are well attended, students have not recognized the value of cultural events; thus, participation in the past has been low. We would like to see more students involved, especially those brought up in Vancouver, so they can learn more of the Chinese culture. That's one of the services the club provides. All it takes is time and effort on the part of the students. Do you think Chinese culture is important enough to warrant your participation?

POETRY

RAIN

it seems so long ago

I remember seeing you coming
from beyond the open sea

you brushed the mountains
and made them cry
while I sat on the rooftop
with friends
laughing
waiting for you

do you still remember
that time
I challenged you to a race
to my doorstep
and won?

Jim Wong-Chu

CONTRI-BUTORS

Susan Carter is a freelance publicist, producer and arts administrator.

Teri Chan is a special education teacher of the *College Street Secondary School, Toronto Board of Education* at the *Clarke Institute of Psychiatry.*

T.Y. Ho is one of the contributors of the publication, *Journal* which is put out by the *Chinese Students Association* of the *University of British Columbia.*

Paulus Lau has been the editor of the *Canasian Newsletter* since its inception in 1983. Besides working as the senior French translator for *Sears Canada Inc.*, he recently started his own translation company. His interests in the arts covered all the creative areas.

Doris Nipp was a Doctorate Candidate on a Commonwealth Scholarship at the *University of Hong Kong* completing a thesis on Overseas Chinese.

Christine Pinto is a supporter and volunteer of *Asianadian.*

Jack Seto, editor of this issue, is a freelance photographer and does community volunteer work.

Andy Tong is a freelance graphic designer and a recent graduate of *George Brown College* in Toronto.

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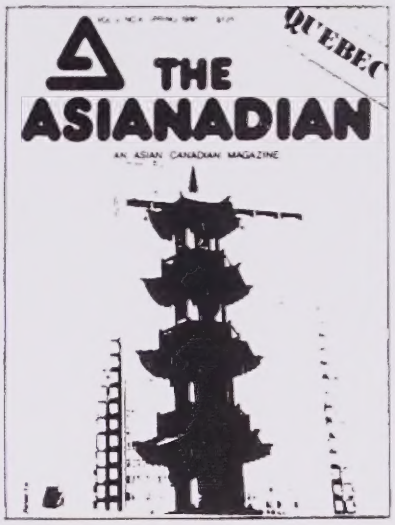

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